

## [Mrs. Ina W. Mayer]

Edith L. Crawford,

Carrizozo, N. Mex.

2125 words.

### PIONEER STORY [Mrs. Ina W. Mayes?]

I was born in the state of Illinois in 1866. In the spring of 1873 my father, W. J. Wauchope, went to Kansas and bought a farm in Sumner County, eight miles from Wellington and twenty-five miles from Wichita, Kansas. In the fall of this same year he sent back to LaSalle, Illinois for my mother and the five children, three girls and two boys. We went by train. We lived on this farm for six years raising wheat and corn mostly. In 1874 we had a wonderful crop and the grasshoppers came and cleaned our fields, they were called the Rocky Mountain grasshoppers. They came in such droves that the sky turned dark and we could hear the roar long before we could see what they were. We were very frightened. By night our fields were cleaned out and crops all gone. The grasshoppers were so thick that they stopped trains. The next year we put in a big wheat crop. Just as it was ready to harvest Father took the whole family to Wichita with him for supplies, going in a covered wagon.

On our way back home we were caught in a terrible rain and hail storm. When we reached the banks of the Ninnescaw [River?] it was running bank full so we camped on the bank of this river until noon the next day before we could cross. On arriving home we found our wheat pasted flat on the ground. The hail had beat it down and ruined it. The neighbors told us that the hail stones were as large as goose eggs.

## Library of Congress

My father was so discouraged at this that he left his family and went to Chicago, Illinois and got a job. We had a hired man that year and he did not take any care of the crops and the sun flowers took the farm. My father came home in the fall and the next year he planted mostly corn and made a bumper crop. By the time it was ready to gather he could not sell it for any price. The cribs were all full and corn was in the yard and fields and everywhere. Father bought hogs and fattened them and sold them. By this / time my father was so discouraged with farming he decided to leave. He went to Fort Dodge, Kansas, looking for something else and there he met Charles Siringo who had just landed in Fort Dodge with a herd of cattle he had driven thro'ugh from Texas. (I want to say here that in later years I met this same Charles Siringo, in White Oaks, New Mexico, and he became a very good friend of our family). This gave my father the idea of going to Texas and getting in the cattle business. In the fall of 1879 he sold his Kansas farm and we all started for Texas. There were seven of us children then. We went in a covered wagon drawn by six horses. Father put side boards on the wagon and in the bottom part stored our trunks and other belongings. Then father built the wagon out to six feet wide so the bed springs would fit flat and we all slept in the wagon. Mother's Singer sewing machine was tied on the wagon and so were the water kegs. We did not bring any live stock except the team. We were so heavily loaded 3 that it took all six horses to pull the wagon. We headed straight south thro'ugh the Indian Territory. Father wanted to locate on the Red River in Texas. I remember once when we camped for dinner near an Indian village the Indians flocked around our camp. We were all just scared to death of them. Mother cooked a big pot of sweet potatoes and set it down in the middle of a bunch of [Indians?]. When they had eaten all they could they put the rest in their blankets and took them away with them. Mother always tried to stay on the good side of the Indians and would give them most anything she had. One day as we were pulling up a long grade, just as we reached the top of the hill one of the wagon wheels broke down, and we had to camp on the side of the hill. Father rode eight miles to an Indian settlement to get the wheel fixed. We had to stay these three days. Father rode back and forth each day until the wheel was fixed. When he got back with the wheel it was too late to start on that night so he put the wheel

## Library of Congress

on the wagon and drew it down to the foot of the hill. There was a terrible norther blowing up, it was bitter cold, and we had to stay there the next day.

The only time we were really frightened by the Indians was once when we camped for the night in a lot of sage brush and could not see very far. After making camp two Indians rode up on horses and looked over the camp. They talked and laughed to each other and rode off. After a little while we heard Indians whooping and yelling. Father became uneasy, so he hitched up the horses and we left in the night. The rest of the way was 4 uneventful tho'ugh we traveled thro'ugh some lovely country.

When we got to the Red River we decided to go on south to the Wichita River. There we ran into a big snow storm and had to stay there for a week, having to dig our wood from underneath the snow. We did not like that country as it was too cold so we went on further south to Fort Worth, Texas. It rained so much that we could not pull thro'ugh the black mud so we were there for another week. From Fort Worth we went on to San Antonio, Texas. We made our camp about four miles from the town of San Antonio, and stayed there a month to rest and to decide what to do. Father scouted [around?] and went to [Castorville?], Texas and bought thirty head of cows. We broke camp and went thro'ugh Castorville to pick up the cattle and started west for Fort Davis, Texas. While we were gathering the cattle at Castorville it rained so much that the wagon could not be pulled thro'ugh the mud. All our provisions ran low and we could not get any more, living on mush and molasses several days. We took two of the teams to drive the cows and the children took turns about riding and driving the cattle. One day two men caught up with us one riding a horse and one a burro. They traveled on with us, helping us with the cattle. We were glad to have them as the Indians were on the war path in this part of the country. Just about a month before, the Indians had attacked an emigrant train going over the same route and had killed all the people, driven off the stock, took what they wanted, and had burned the rest of the stuff and the wagons. We did not see any Indians. The soldiers had come in 5 after their attack on the emigrant train and the Indians had scattered. We were scared to death all the time. We had been warned of a dry stretch of country about

## Library of Congress

sixty-five miles long where there was no water. It took us three days to cross this and our cattle and horses had no water. Father would take some of our drinking water and wet the tongues of the team so that they could go on. They almost gave out. One of the cows had a baby calf, we took the calf in the wagon and the cow went with the herd. The cow gave us milk which we were glad to have. The two men who had been with us decided that they could make better time so they went on ahead of us. After being out one day they returned to our camp. The burro had given out and the man who was riding him had to walk. He was so exhausted when he got to camp that he just fell down. Mother gave him some milk and revived him and both of the men stayed with us / the rest of the trip until we reached Fort Davis. On the third day we reached a watering hole that the Government had fixed up just a short time before. This was a small spring in the rocks and a trough had been made for the water to run thro'ugh. It was not very large. When the cattle smelled the water they struck out at a trot to get it. We did not loose a single head of the stock but they were very weak. From there we went on to Muscas Canyon where we camped for about a week. It was a beautiful place, with grass about ten inches high, we turned the stock loose to graze and rest. We then went to Fort Davis and stayed a month there. We had intended to locate there, but there were so many Indians and so much talk of their 6 killing white settlers, we were afraid to stay. Father wanted to go on to El Paso but was afraid to make the trip on account of the Indians. One of the men who was with us got a job driving a stage coach between Fort Davis and El Paso. We never saw or heard from him again and just supposed he was killed in an Indian raid. Selling all our stock except four horses we started back to San Antonio, Texas, making good time as we had no stock to look after. We lived about nine months in San Antonio and all the children who were old enough went to school there. We rented a fortified house with walls two feet thick and with a two foot adobe wall all around it with only one entrance to the plaza, a gate which was kept locked. My father did odd jobs. One day my father picked up an old newspaper and brought it home, as mother was reading it she saw where a John E. Wilson had made a rich gold strike in White Oaks, New Mexico. (This is what is now known as the South Homestake in White Oaks). That was the name of my mother's father and she had not

## Library of Congress

heard from him in twenty years. He had left Illinois to prospect for gold in Colorado. Mother said "I just know that is my father." She wrote him a letter and he answered right away wanting us to come to White Oaks. Leaving San Antonio for White Oaks on March 21, 1881, we had to buy our whole outfit again getting a covered wagon with four horses. Our trip was not very eventful except for one incident, that happened about half way. We camped one night near a tent fort, where there were soldiers, staking our four horses near our camp, for 7 it was an awfully dark night. In the night we heard an awful commotion and our horses broke loose and ran away. My father went on foot to look for them and found them twenty miles below where we were camped, at a cow ranche. It took him four days to get them and we were in that camp about a week. We got to White Oaks on Sunday afternoon, May 1st, 1881. We met a lady and two children and talked to them and they said they were coming from Sunday school. We lived with my grandfather Wilson in White Oaks, and my father hauled freight from Las Vegas and Socorro to White Oaks. After living in White Oaks for five years my father went to South America, leaving my mother and the seven children with my grandfather. In 1890 he came back to this country and while on a visit to his mother in Iowa was taken very ill, there my mother went to nurse him. He died after a short illness at the age of forty-nine years. My mother took his body back to the old home at LaSalle, Illinois for burial. She returned to White Oaks and later went to El Paso and lived with my youngest brother. She died at the age of sixty-six years, in May 1910.

Charles D. Mayer and I were married in January 14, 1888, in White Oaks, New Mexico, he was a blacksmith at the time, after disposing of his blacksmith shop, he worked for some time for his brother Paul Mayer who ran a livery stable in White Oaks in the early days.

After leaving this job he went into the general merchandise business in White Oaks, we stayed there until 1921, when we moved our stock of merchandise to Carrizozo, New Mexico and continued in this business until 1930, when we had to retire on account of our health.

## Library of Congress

There was two children born to this union, a girl and a boy, our girl is married and living in Modesto, California.

The boy is married and lives in El Paso, Texas, in the winter time and at Ruidoso, New Mexico, during the summer months. [???